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Title: Old tobacco growers welcome better facility

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Lead:

ERLANGER - In about two years, the Dixie Farmers Market could offer fresh produce from a permanent structure on Dixie Highway.

Article:

ERLANGER - In about two years, the Dixie Farmers Market could offer fresh produce from a permanent structure on Dixie Highway.

The Kentucky Agricultural Development Board has approved a \$3,824 grant for the city of Erlanger to do a feasibility study and design a pavilion. Erlanger officials plan to apply for grants for construction money.

The grants encourage farmers who were previously dependent on tobacco to sell other things, including fruits and vegetables, crafts and products like jams, jellies and sauces, said Kara Keeton, spokeswoman for the Governor's Office of Agricultural Policy.

"Our producers are all trying to figure what mix of agricultural products will fit on the old tobacco farms," said Bob Yoder, Erlanger-Elsmere Renaissance coordinator. For two years, Yoder has managed Dixie Farmers Market.

Burlington farmer Bob Murphy, who phased out tobacco several years ago, now raises tomatoes, green beans, corn, squash and pickles that he sells at the weekly market.

"It's difficult to sell in the rain," Murphy said. "If we had a little shelter, it would help."

Toni Lovelace, who raises corn, green beans, tomatoes, peppers and okra on 18 acres at the Kenton-Pendleton county border, agreed.

"This year, there were a couple of days when it poured," Lovelace said. "Having a covered stand would definitely help. I think it would be safer too. Kids have walked up with their moms or been on their bikes when drivers have cut through the parking lot."

Yoder said he envisions the pavilion having multiple uses - everything from craft shows to a place where local vendors can sell their wares for the World's Longest Yard Sale.

At 4 p.m. Sept. 1, Dixie Farmers Market will host a cooking demonstration and free sampling by chef Nancy Russman, a culinary arts teacher from Louisville. Russman will prepare dishes using beef, pork, catfish and prawn, or freshwater shrimp. All of the meat is supplied by Kentucky producers.

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